

## ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

April 22, 2004

***The next Advisory Group meeting will be held Thursday, July 15, in Helena.***

### Attendees:

Rod Caldwell, USGS  
Gary Carter, IHS, *via phone*  
Rick Chiotti, MT OPI  
Dan Dennehy, Butte-Silver Bow Health Dept.,  
*via phone*  
Tom Ellerhoff, MT DEQ  
Gail Gutsche, Montana State Legislator, *via phone*  
Roman Hendrickson, MD  
Jim Hill, MSL-NRIS  
Marjean Magraw, EPHT Project Coordinator  
Judy Murphy, MT DLI  
Kristin Nei, American Cancer Society, *via phone*  
Curtis Noonan, UM CEHS  
Lou Olcott, DPHHS/Biomonitoring Project  
Joanne Oreskovich, DPHHS/BRFSS

Jeanne Seifert, Dawson Co. Health Dept., *via phone*  
Mike Spence, DPHHS/State Medical Officer  
Darren Steiner, DPHHS/OTD  
Dan Strausbaugh, ATSDR  
Diana Vanek, UM CEHS  
Mike Vogel, MSU Bozeman Extension Service  
Tony Ward, UM CEHS

### Additional Attendees:

Judy Edwards, Montana Consensus Council  
Dan Powers, Butte-Silver Bow Health Dept.,  
*via phone*  
Leah Dreyer, DPHHS/EPHT

The meeting opened with a welcome by Mike Spence and Marjean Magraw. After introductions, Marjean outlined the purpose of the meeting: first, to give an update on the EPHT project; second, to hear reports from two community environmental health needs assessment sites, given by Jeanne Seifert of Dawson County, and Dan Powers of Butte-Silver Bow County; third, to continue the discussion started at the last Advisory Group meeting of developing criteria for setting priorities for environmental health issues; and last, to schedule Advisory Group meetings through the end of September.

### EPHT PROJECT UPDATE

Marjean outlined the following project accomplishments since the last meeting:

#### IT Assessment

At the last meeting, Northrop Grumman reported on their Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure Overview which looked at systems at DPHHS, DEQ, and NRIS, and discussed some of their recommendations for data linking options. There have been some delays on their final written report with recommendations. Northrop Grumman decided to gather more information by contacting all the other Tracking states who are developing IT networks and looking at the approach each state is taking. They are still getting responses. They reported that from information received, Montana seems to be on track with other States as far as progress. The EPHT Project plans to meet with Northrop Grumman and IT staff and partners to discuss recommendations and plan for Year 3 in the next week.

## **Statewide Environmental Health Needs Assessment**

Marjean gave an update on a few ways information is being gathered for the Statewide Environmental Needs Assessment process.

- 11 Community Environmental Health Needs Assessments are underway: Two sites will report today on their progress.
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS): twenty questions on environmental health have been added to the 2004 random survey of Montana citizens, and the survey is currently in progress.
- Dr. Wade Hill of MSU Bozeman has been gathering information from extension agents, advocacy groups, county commissioners, and tribal and county public health staff, and will hopefully be able to report on some of his findings at the next meeting.

## **Pilot Data Linkage Projects**

UM has been funded for a pilot project linking air quality data with health effects data from clinics and hospitals in a 3-county area related to asthma and cardiovascular disease. Curtis Noonan gave a short update of the progress of the pilot project: approvals and data usage agreements have been obtained and put into place in at least four of the five hospitals in the 3-county area. Currently, the project is talking with IT people from UM to help set up a database framework, which will incorporate emergency department health outcomes data, outpatient clinic data, environmental monitoring data, and some meteorological data. Once the framework is set up, IT contacts at the hospital will be asked to submit data in the format most suitable for the database. Curtis also indicated that data will be collected from outpatient clinics. He welcomed suggestions and comments from anyone on recommendations for structuring the database.

Marjean explained that there had also been discussions with Montana Tech to possibly develop a pilot data linkage project in Butte. Collaboration is being sought between the hospital informatics program and sources of environmental data.

## **Partnerships**

A contract has been developed with Montana State Library-NRIS to assist with GIS mapping of health data, inventory of other databases, and technical assistance with linking data. Duane Anderson of MSL-NRIS attended the national EPHT partners conference in March in Philadelphia with the Montana EPHT staff.

## **Communication Plan**

- The EPHT project has been looking at accessing existing venues around Montana at which to share information about the tracking project. One of those venues is the Spring Public Health meeting, May 11-13 in Helena; EPHT will have a poster presentation and brochures. Christine Korhonen and Kammy Johnson will be giving presentations related to EH issues, as well as Dan Strausbaugh from ATSDR.
- At the September 8-10 MPHA meeting in Butte, themed “Nature Calling: Public Health and Your Environment”, the EPHT project will fund Dr. Katherine Shea from Chapel Hill to speak on Children’s Environmental Health issues. Marjean

mentioned that if interest exists, the Advisory Group could perhaps meet in conjunction with the conference to hear the speakers.

- Dr. Mark Anderson, director of the EPA Region 8 Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU), will also present on Children's Environmental Health issues at the September MPHA meeting.
- Dr. Spence recently addressed the Montana Environmental Health Association (MEHA) Conference, and will speak at upcoming pediatric conferences this spring and in the fall, as well as at other state association conferences.
- Brochure in print: a brochure describing the Montana EPHT project and activities is currently under design, and will be used for distribution at conferences and public venues. Additionally, a poster presentation is being put together to take to conferences.

### **Year 3 Plans**

A draft of the EPHT Year 3 Plan for the cooperative agreement with the CDC will be sent to the CDC at the end of April. Year 3 begins September 30, 2004, and ends September 29, 2005.

- The EPHT project is considering continuing the local infrastructure training (Community Environmental Health Needs Assessments), as many gains have been made in conducting trainings, developing awareness of environmental health issues, and gaining input from local community members.
- A staged approach to IT planning will begin, and EPHT will help support the linkage of state databases.
- Physician education: Dana Headapohl, occupational medicine physician at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, is interested in assisting with regional grand rounds presentations to build awareness of environmental health and how health care providers can recognize some of the issues that might be related to environmental concerns.
- Continued interagency collaborations, using existing available data, linking environmental data with health data.
- Improve web access to health data, making data in various forms more accessible.

### **Advisory Group Input**

Continued input is needed from the Advisory Group on developing criteria for setting priorities for the Statewide Environmental Health needs assessment.

- Short-term linking projects with existing data.
- Environmental Health topics that need to be addressed in the next 2-5 years, preparing data sets for linkage.
- Long-range plan: what should we be tracking in Montana?

### **COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENTS UPDATE**

Jeanne Seifert of Dawson County, and Dan Powers of Butte-Silver Bow County, reported on the progress of their respective Community Environmental Health needs assessments.

## **Dawson County, Jeanne Seifert**

Jeanne explained that she was excited to be involved in the needs assessment process because Dawson County has much data on health risks, but has never conducted a comprehensive needs assessment related to environmental health. She and Joni Garpestad began the needs assessment process in January 2004, by inviting 65 different community stakeholders representing a wide variety of interests to an initial meeting; 27 stakeholders attended, representing the medical, environmental health, agricultural, business, media, schools, medical providers, and industry fields. The group reviewed environmental health definitions and then determined their own definition of environmental health. The group also brainstormed a list of community concerns, from which to craft a survey to take to the larger community; the initial list included about 30 concerns.

From the list, a public survey was developed, and was administered at an agricultural trade show, in high schools in Glendive and Ritchie, at the Ritchie Senior Center, the county health fair, and to a few local community groups. About 350 surveys were completed. Results are still in the process of being compiled with the help of a Dawson Community College instructor. A database has been developed which will sort the survey information by age, representation, occupation, level of education, and where in the county the respondent.

From the initial survey, there were fifteen areas of concern identified, including: coal bed methane development; city drinking water quality; second-hand smoke; use of farm chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, and overuse of nutrients which run off into the ground water); lagoon odor; drug and alcohol abuse and the effect on children; hantavirus; West Nile virus; river and stream pollution; water well pollution; availability/lack of access to running, walking, and biking paths. Jeanne noted that seasonal, short-term issues often drive or determine community concerns, and it would be helpful to have a broader understanding of consistent environmental health concerns.

The results of the survey are being refined and data gaps are being filled through the use of focus groups, targeting populations that did not have an opportunity to respond to the survey. Through the focus group interviews, economic development has emerged as a top priority, with the reasoning that the resources do not exist to take care of many of the community concerns, which in turn affects environmental health. Issues include:

- Testing water wells for contamination: about 50% of Dawson County uses private wells, which are largely untested due to the high cost.
- Water quality: there is a need for increased testing of private wells and public education about the testing of river water.
- Traffic safety and the lack of traffic lights, after a number of accidents in a specific area of the community.
- Increase in cancer in the community: whether the increase is linked to an environmental health risk, or lifestyle, heredity, and the high degree of community awareness.
- Lagoon smell.

- Recycling: possible need for expansion of the existing recycling center.
- Second-hand smoke: much has already been done, but more can still be done.

Once the focus group interviews have been completed, the Board of Health will be consulted to prioritize the concerns. Jeanne is hopeful that after encouraging the community and showing interest in environmental health concerns, some of the priorities will be “quick wins”, easy to undertake and which show the community that something is being done. She sees a couple of such areas, including education about the need for testing of water wells, and distribution of information about West Nile virus and hantavirus. Additionally, Jeanne hopes there will be a long-range strategy developed to address some of the community’s environmental health concerns.

### **Butte-Silver Bow County, Dan Powers**

Dan began by explaining that Butte-Silver Bow’s approach to the community environmental health needs assessment differed from the processes of some of the other needs assessment sites. In February, an Environmental Health Needs Assessment committee was formed to develop a survey based on the information committee members receive or gather from the people they work with or represent. The committee members include the mayor of Walkerville; a representative of the Butte area HRDC; an employee of Pioneer Technical Services; an employee of the ASMI silicon production plant; a council commissioner; a head of environmental engineering at Montana Tech, who also serves on the Board of Health; a school district board member whose wife runs a day-care; a representative from the senior citizen center; a representative from St. James’ Hospital. Dan believes the committee represents a broad perspective of the community, from school children to senior citizens, low-income populations, and industry and education fields.

The needs assessment committee focused on identifying needs outside of Superfund concerns, to find areas that needed more study or programs that need to be bolstered. The committee has now met three times, during which an environmental health definition was generated, several different environmental health needs topics were examined, and a timeline was developed for the work of the needs assessment committee. Distribution of the survey was also discussed, drawing on the ideas and experiences of the other Montana environmental health needs assessment sites.

At the second meeting, the committee focused specifically on housing issues, including asbestos, lead dust and arsenic dust in attics around Butte-Silver Bow, radon issues, and general housing and construction issues, especially concerning low-income housing. The third meeting dealt with lifestyle issues: a member of the Southwest Montana Drug Task Force spoke about methamphetamine use and the general drug use problems in Butte-Silver Bow. A health department representative also spoke about the indoor air quality ordinance developed for second-hand smoke. The committee also discussed Butte-Silver Bow’s solid waste issues. Air quality and water quality issues will be discussed at the next meeting. Dan reiterated that there is a lot of overlap with Superfund issues, but the needs assessment committee is trying to develop their own niche to address

environmental health concerns. The last meeting will discuss communicable diseases, such as hantavirus and West Nile virus.

The survey will be distributed in June, and the committee is hoping for about 400 responses. From the responses, a data analysis will be done, and the needs will be prioritized. Dan noted that while their approach is different, it was felt that the best approach for Butte-Silver Bow was to have community members develop the survey, and then bring it to the rest of the community.

Mike congratulated Jeanne and Dan on their accomplishments. Curtis Noonan expressed interest in hearing the definitions of environmental health developed by the two sites. The definitions are given below:

### **Butte-Silver Bow County**

The environment is everything around us - the air we breathe, the water we drink and use and the food we consume. It is also the chemicals, radiation, microbes, and physical forces with which we come into contact. Environmental health and protection is the art and science of protecting against environmental factors that adversely impact human health or the ecologic balances, whether in the natural or man-made environment. In considering these issues, we must assure the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, income, or educational level with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. We must also ensure that no population is forced to shoulder a disproportionate burden of the negative human health and environmental impacts of pollution and other environmental hazards.

### **Dawson County**

Environmental Health focuses on the health interrelationships between people and their environment, promotes human health and well-being, and fosters a safe and healthful environment. The environment is everything around us, the air we breathe, the water we drink and use, and the food we consume.

## **DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PRIORITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS** *facilitated discussion*

### **Judy Edwards, Montana Consensus Council**

Judy Edwards, from the Montana Consensus Council, led a facilitated discussion on developing criteria to identify key environmental health concerns; the discussion was a continuation of the process begun at the February 26 Advisory Group meeting. To better develop criteria for ranking environmental concerns, the group reviewed two existing models of criteria, from ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) and PACE-EH (Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health).

The group first reviewed the PACE and ATSDR criteria categories, to determine if they were appropriate for Montana. Dan Strausbaugh clarified that the ATSDR criteria examples were not the only tools used by ATSDR regarding environmental health and

chemical exposure issues; parts may be applicable, but for the needs of EPHT and the Advisory Group, the PACE criteria would be more comprehensive.

Judy asked the group if they would like to incorporate their criteria developed at the last meeting into one of the models or if they wanted to take their own list and incorporate ideas from the models. The group agreed that rather than create a whole new ranking model, the PACE model could be adapted to fit Montana's needs. The group worked on changing the PACE model to be appropriate for use in Montana. (See attached model)

Dr. Spence suggested adding a likert scale to the model for ranking purposes. It was also suggested that the group examine one or two actual environmental health issues using the model the next meeting to see how it works.

The model will assist in the ranking of environmental health concerns. The tracking project can then utilize this ranking and determine which issues have information available to develop data linkages and which areas will require increased surveillance efforts.

## **WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS**

Marjean asked the group to consider meeting dates from now until September. She also mentioned that the EPHT project's CDC program officer may be visiting Montana this summer, and perhaps an Advisory Group meeting could be planned in conjunction with his visit. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Katherine Shea will be speaking at the Butte MPHA Conference titled "Nature Calling: Public Health and Your Environment" (September 8-10), and if there is sufficient interest, an Advisory Group meeting will be held in Butte in the fall in conjunction with this conference. Dr. Spence will also be presenting on Libby at this conference and possibly the Region 8 EPA Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit Physician, Dr. Mark Anderson will present as well.

**The next proposed meeting date is Thursday July 15<sup>th</sup> in Helena.**

Judy Murphy announced that she will be presenting a six-hour class on assuring good indoor air quality, in Helena on May 25<sup>th</sup>. For more information, contact Judy at 444-5267, or <http://www.montanasafty.com>

Marjean thanked the group for attending, and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.